Collecting Antarctic meteorites

Japan’s Antarctic research expeditions have collected more than 17,000 meteorites so far. In 1998, the 39th expedition succeeded in collecting around 4,100 of them; in 2000, the 41st expedition collected 3,500 more. Since the 51st expedition, exploration for meteorites has been conducted every summer. The three explorations starting with the 51st expedition have been joint projects with the Belgian Antarctic Expedition. These meteorites are highly diverse and varied, including lunar and Martian meteorites, and our research on them contributes to the advancement of planetary science.

After classification, about 200 meteorite samples (normally weighing no more than 1g) and thin sections are loaned out every year for research by the world’s meteorite researchers. We loan lunar meteorites, Martian meteorites, chondrites, iron meteorites and other principal types to science museums, junior high schools, senior high schools and universities all over Japan for display or educational purposes.